

I am ful redy him to accuse,
And him punissh and hampre so,
That he his chirche shal forgo.
But whoso hath in his feling
The consequence of such shryving,
Shal seen that prest may never have might
To knowe the conscience aright
Of him that is under his cure.
And this ageyns holy scripture,
That biddeth every herde honeste
Have verry knowing of his beste.
But pore folk that goon by strete,
That have no gold, ne sommes grete,
Hem wolde I lete to her prelates,
Or lete hir prestis knowe hir states,
for to me right nought yeve they.

Amour.

AND why is it?
fals/Semblant. for they ne may.
They ben so bare, I take no keep;
But I wol have the fatte sheep;
Lat parish prestis have the lene,
I yeve not of hir harm a bene!
And if that prelats grucchen it,
That oughten wroth be in hir wit,
To lese her fatte bestes so,
I shal yeve hem a stroke or two,
That they shal lesen with the force,
Ye, bothe hir mytre and hir croce.
Thus jape I hem, and have do longe,
My priveleges been so stronge.

ALS/SEMBLANT wolde have
stinted here,
But Love ne made him no such chere
That he was wery of his sawe;
But for to make him glad and fawe,
He seide: Tel on more specially,
How that thou servest untrewly.

Tel forth, and shame thee never a del;
for as thyn abit shewith wel,
Thou semest an holy heremyte.

fals/Semblant. Soth is, but I am an ypocryte.

Amour. Thou gost and prechest povertie?

fals/Semblant. Ye, sir; but richesse hath poustee.

Amour. Thou prechest abstinence also?

fals/Semblant.

SIR, I wol fillen, so mote I go,
My paunche of gode mete and wyne,
As shulde a maister of divyne;
for how that I me pover feyne,
Yit alle pore folk I disdeyne.
I love bet the acqueyntaunce
Ten tymes, of the king of fraunce,
Than of pore man of mylde mode.
Though that his soule be also gode,
for whan I see beggers quaking,
Naked on mixens al stinking,
for hungre crye, and eek for care,
I entremete not of hir fare.

They been so pore, and ful of pyne,
They might not ones yeve me dyne,
for they have nothing but hir lyf;
What shulde he yeve that likketh his knyf?

It is but foly to entremete,
To seke in boundes nest fat mete.
Let bere hem to the spitel anoon,
But, for me, comfort gete they noon.
But a riche sike usurere

Wolde I visyte and drawe nere;
Him wol I comforte and rebete,
for I hope of his gold to gete.
And if that wikked deth him have,
I wol go with him to his grave.
And if ther any reprove me,
Why that I lete the pore be,
Wostow how I mot ascape?

I sey, and swere him ful rape,
That riche men han more tecches
Of sinne, than han pore wrecches,
And han of counseil more mister;
And therfore I wol drawe hem ner.
But as gret hurt, it may so be,
Hath soule in right gret povertie,
As soul in gret riches, forsothe,
Albeit that they hurten bothe,
for riches and mendicitees
Ben cleped two extremitees;
The mene is cleped suffisaunce,
Ther lyth of vertu the aboundaunce.

AND Salamon, ful wel I woot,
In his Parables us wroot,
As it is knowe of many a wight,
In his thrittethe chapitre right:

God, thou me kepe, for thy poustee,
fro riches and mendicitee;
for if a riche man him dresse
To thenke to moche on his riches,
His herte on that so fer is set,
That he his creatour foryet;
And him, that begging wolay greve,
How shulde I by his word him leve?

Unnethe that he nis a micher,
forsworn, or elles God is lyer.
Thus seith Salamon sawes;
Ne we finde writen in no lawes,
And namely in our Cristen lay,
Who seith Ye, I dar sey Nay,
That Crist, ne his apostlis dere,
Whyl that they walkede in erthe here,
Were never seen her bred begging,
for they nolde beggen for nothing.
And right thus were men wont to teche;
And in this wyse wolde it preche
The maistres of divinitee
Somytyme in Paris the citee.

AND if men wolde thergeyn appose
The naked text, and lete the glose,
It mighte sone assoiled be;
for men may wel the sothe see,
That, parde, they might axe a thing
Pleyntly forth, without begging,
for they weren Goddis herdis dere,
And cure of soules hadden here,
They nolde nothing begge hir fode;
for aftir Crist was don on rode,
With hir propre hondis they wrought,

And with travel, and elles nought,
They wonden al hir sustenaunce,
And liven forth in hir penaunce,
And the remenaunt yeve away
To other pore folk alwey.
They neither biden tour ne halle,
But leve in houses smale withalle.
A mighty man, that can and may,
Shulde with his honde and body alway
Winne him his food in laboring,
If he ne have rent or sich a thing,
Although he be religious,
And God to serven curious.
Thus mote he don, or do trespas,
But if it be in certeyn cas,
That I can reherce, if mister be,
Right wel, whan the tyme I see.

SEKE the book of Seynt Austyn,

Be it in paper or perchemin,

Cheras he writ of these worchinges,

Thou shalt seen that non excusings

A parfit man ne shulde seke

By wordis, ne by dedis eke,

Although he be religious,

And God to serven curious,

That he ne shal, so mote I go,

With propre hondis and body also,

Gete his food in laboring,

If he ne have propretee of thing.

Yit shulde he selle al his substaunce,

And with his swink have sustenaunce,

If he be parfit in bountee.

Thus han the bookes tolde me:

for he that wol gon ydilly,

And useth it ay besily

To haunten other mennes table,

He is a trechour, ful of fable;

Ne he ne may, by gode resoun,

Excuse him by his orisoun.

for men bihoveth, in som gyse,

Somytyme leven Goddes servyse

To gon and purchasen her nede.

Men mote eten, that is no drede,

And slepe, and eek do other thing;

So longe may they leve praying.

So may they eek hir prayer blinne,

While that they werke, hir mete to winne.

SEYNT AUSTYN wol therto accorde,

In thilke book that I recorde.

Justinian eek, that made lawes,

Path thus forboden, by olde dawes:

No man, up peyne to be deed,

Mighty of body, to begge his breed,

If he may swinke, it for to gete;

Men shulde him rather mayme or bete,

Or doon of him apert justice,

Chan suffren him in such malice.

They don not wel, so mote I go,

That taken such almesse so,

But if they have som privelege,

That of the peyne hem wol allege.

But how that is, can I not see,

But if the prince disseyved be;

Ne I ne wene not, sikerly,
That they may have it rightfully.
But I wol not determyne
Of princes power, ne defyne,
Ne by my word comprende, ywis,
If it so fer may strecche in this.
I wol not entremete a del;
But I trowe that the book seith wel.
Who that taketh almesses, that be
Dewe to folk that men may see
Lame, feble, wery, and bare,
Pore, or in such maner care,
That conne winne hem nevermo,
for they have no power therto,
He eteth his owne dampning,
But if he lye, that made al thing.
And if ye such a truaunt finde,
Chastise him wel, if ye be kinde.
But they wolde hate you, percas,
And, if ye fillen in hir laas,
They wolde eftsones do you scathe,
If that they mighte, late or rathe;
for they be not ful pacient,
That han the world thus foule blent.
And witeth wel, wher that God bad
The good man selle al that he had,
And folowe him, and to pore it yive,
He wolde not therfore that he live
To serven him in mendience,
for it was never his sentence;

But he bad wirken whan that nede is,

And folwe him in goode dedis.

SEYNT POULE, that loved al holy chirche,

He bade thapostles for to wirche,

And winnen hir lyfode in that wyse,

And hem defended truaundyse,

And seide: Wirke with your honden;

Thus shul the thing be undirstonden.

He nolde, ywis, bidde hem begging,

Ne sellen gospel, ne preching,

Lest they berafte, with hir asking,

folk of hir catel or of hir thing.

OR in this world is many a man

That yeveth his good, for he ne can

Werne it for shame, or elles he

Wolde of the asker delivered be;

And, for he him encombreth so,

He yeveth him good to late him go;

But it can him nothing profyte,

They lese the yift and the meryte.

The goode folk, that Poule to preched,

Profred him ofte, whan he hem teched

Som of hir good in charite;

But therof right nothing took he;

But of his hondwerk wolde he gete

Clothes to wryen him, and his mete.

Amour.

EL me than how a man may liven,

That al his good to pore hath yiven,

And wol but only bidde his bedis,

And never with honde labour his

nedis:

May he do so?